

# Women's Participation in Livestock Markets

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Between the 1970s and 1990s, per capita meat consumption in developing countries more than tripled. As a result, in recent decades, livestock markets have experienced both increasing demand and rapid change. Women's participation in such markets is an important way to improve the welfare of women and their families. However, it is also important that women are able to make decisions about which animals and products are sold and what is done with the proceeds of sales. Otherwise, participation alone may not benefit women.

## Gender and marketing

As livestock production becomes more commercialised, women may not be able to compete with men or derive the same benefits. For instance, among the Fulani (Nigeria) and the Omduruman (Sudan), men have been attracted by the increasing monetary importance of products traditionally controlled by women e.g. milk and hides. Women's role is often then reduced to that of labourers.

Women lack secure rights to land, labour and

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With training and good quality goats, Murekatete Christine from Kenya is earning enough income to send her children to school

## Questions

- What factors influence women's participation in livestock markets?
- How does their participation change as markets become more formalised?
- Are women more likely to participate in the marketing of small livestock and livestock products?
- Is women's participation mainly in informal markets?

capital and are less likely than men to be serviced by formal financial institutions. They also face higher transaction costs while marketing. These result from long distances and high transport costs to and from markets, time spent searching for market outlets, lack of quality certification, disorganised brokers and agents, inability to pool products in order to benefit from economies of scale, and inter-seasonal and inter-regional variations in production.

Women's participation at each level of the value chain is influenced by a number of factors, including: their access to capital; their skills, capacities and ability to organise; and constraints on their mobility. Anecdotal evidence and some preliminary research indicate that in a livestock value chain, the number of men compared to women - in terms of representation and control - rises with increases in household wealth and value of milk.

Women's participation in marketing of live animals (cattle, sheep and goats) tends to be much lower than their participation in the milk market. Generally, they have far more rights over livestock products

(milk, butter, cheese, ghee, hides and skins) than they do over the live animals themselves. In some countries, women are more involved in sale of small livestock compared to large livestock. In Ethiopia, evidence suggests that many pastoral women play a significant role in buying and selling of goats and sheep, but not cattle and camels. For most women, access to livestock is by virtue of their relationships to men - husbands, fathers and sons.

## Preference for livestock

Gendered preferences for livestock and livestock products were found to be determined by:

- benefits from income,
- the security of owning the livestock as an asset,
- marketability of the livestock or product,
- livestock management labour requirements.

In Tanzania women had a much higher preference than men for keeping chickens. Preference scores were almost equal (between women and men) for cattle, goats, bees, milk, eggs and honey.

In Kenya, women had a stronger preference for dairy goats, sheep and local chickens than men. Preference could be related to women's lack of land ownership, which is required to raise cattle. Indigenous chickens survive with minimal supplementation while scavenging in backyards. Low maintenance costs, disease resistance and marketability were listed by women as benefits of indigenous chicken rearing. The very low monetary value of indigenous chickens

## Women's participation in livestock marketing

Most research on women's participation in livestock marketing has been carried out in extensive pastoralist production systems. For instance, in the Mandera triangle (covering Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia), women sell milk and butter to traders, restaurant owners and families in nearby towns. The amount of milk and milk products sold varies, based on men's decisions on how many animals to keep close to town when they migrate with animals in search of pasture. However, trading in milk provides women with one of the few opportunities to control their own money. Although the mobility of pastoralist systems is a constraint to women's organised marketing, the growth of settlements has led to women becoming more organised, to meet the increased demand for milk.

makes them undesirable for men.

Dairy goats can be zero-grazed under the cut and carry system and are preferred by women because of high kidding rates and the income earned from milk sales. Although goat milk is thought to have better nutritional quality than cow's milk, the market remains relatively small and informal, and dominated by women.

Because men own land and enjoy its security of tenure, they are able to keep land-dependent

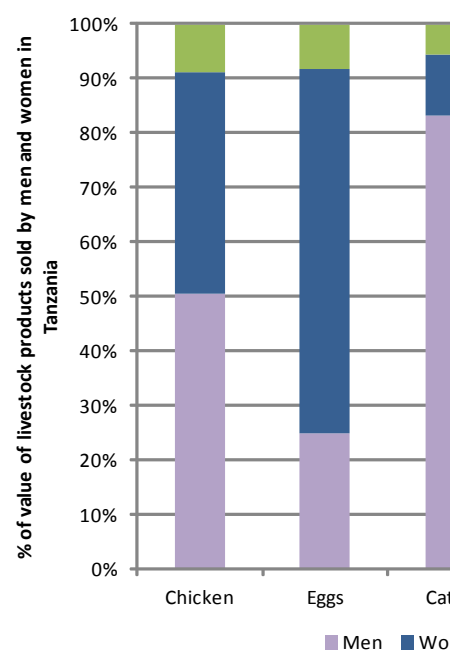
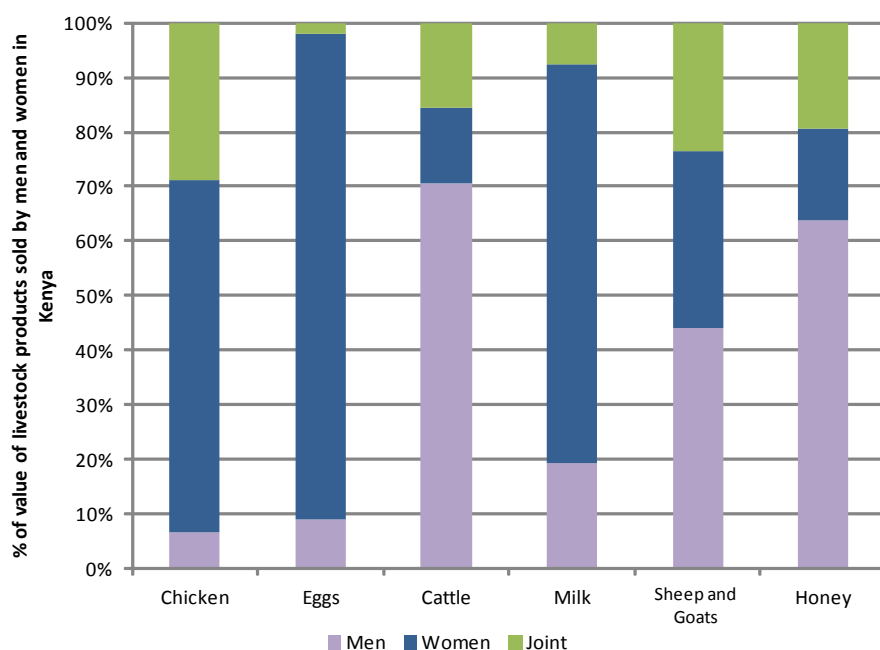


Figure 1. Percentage value of different products sold by men, women and jointly in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique

livestock like cattle. Men's preference for cattle could be explained by cultural attitudes that see large livestock as held by the head of household, due to their high economic value. In particular, men had a stronger preference for dairy cattle, due to the high value of cows and milk in monetary terms. However, women can still control the milk from these cattle, especially through home consumption and occasional sales. Disadvantages for women in keeping cattle include high maintenance costs and labour demands.

In Mozambique men preferred keeping cattle and women preferred keeping chickens. Raising sheep and goats was preferred almost equally by women and men.

## Market participation

In Tanzania and Kenya, women sold more eggs and milk than men, and in Kenya this was also true for sales of chickens (Figure 1). Generally, it appeared more likely for women in Tanzania and Kenya to sell livestock products than livestock. In Mozambique, the sale of sheep and goats was more equal between women and men than sales of cattle and chickens, with men selling about 43% of the total value of sheep and goats, women selling 47% and the rest being sold jointly. As in Kenya, a greater part of the value of chickens sold in Mozambique was sold by women (70%) compared to men (25%).

In Tanzania, the farm gate was the most common market for women selling chickens, where 88% was



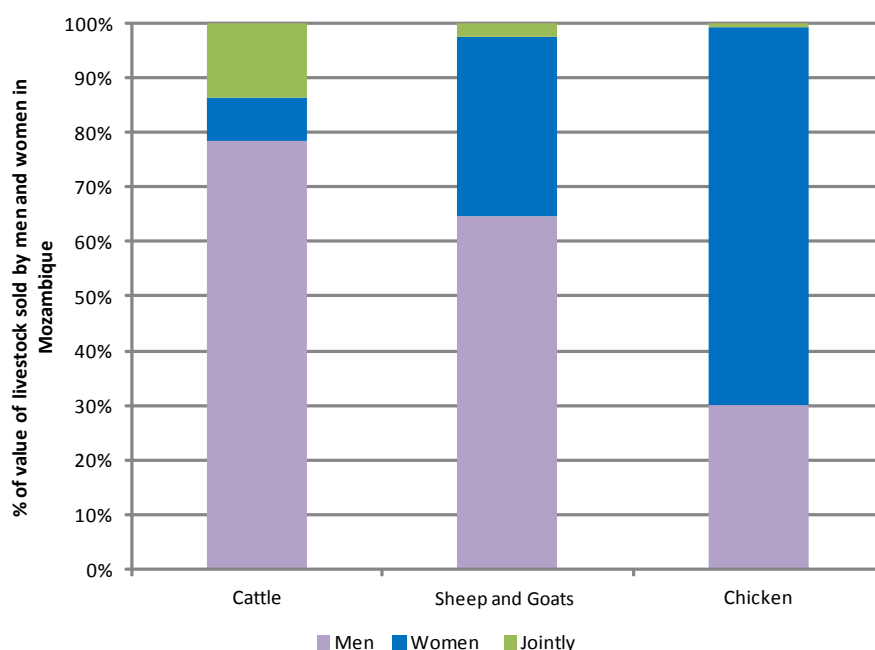
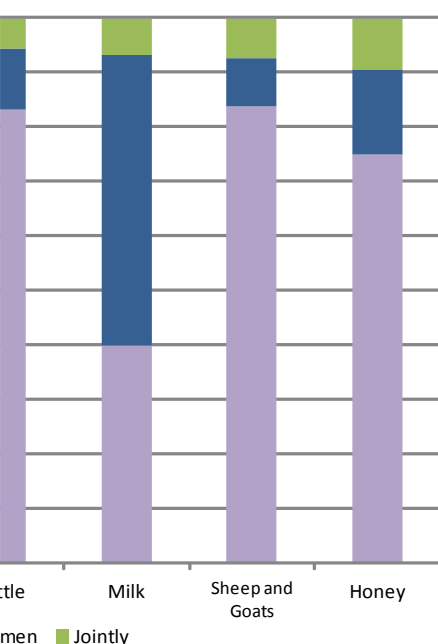
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A growing market for goat milk in Kenya is boosting the income of farmers like Phylis Wambui Mungai

sold, mostly to other farmers but also to traders. This could be due to women's time constraints, and the transaction costs involved in selling to outside markets (e.g. transport which is seldom owned or controlled by women). The most common chicken market for men was also the farm gate but more to traders (47%) than farmers (32%).

Similarly in Kenya, the farm gate was the most common market for women selling chickens, where 70% was sold to farmers and traders. However, the most common chicken market for men was delivery to traders: 56%, compared to 22% by women.

In Kenya, the formal dairy sector has been male dominated due to the strong role of cooperatives and male control over most cash commodities, which have limited women's participation. Some cooperatives also require members to have bank accounts, which is less likely for rural women. Women





may, therefore, prefer products with less formalised markets, such as goat's milk, eggs from backyard poultry, honey and manure, which are beneficial for use at home, as well as for sale in informal markets. Informal markets also provide women with more regular payments, either on a daily or weekly basis, compared to other formal channels. Programmes working on formal markets need to address these constraints for women to benefit from such markets.

A study in Kajiado found that women sold chickens to buy household provisions, chicken feed and drugs. Another study found that in over 80% of households, chickens were sold by women and in over 95% of households, eggs were also sold by women.

There is evidence that women's participation diminishes as distances between markets and sites of production increase, and the value chain becomes more complex with multiple actors.

## Beyond the farm

Participatory value chain mapping revealed that women participated as traders of livestock products in other parts of the value chain, beyond the farm.

**Milk value chain** - In Kenya, farmers explained that about 60% of the sales of milk at the farm gate are done by women. All the brokers buying from the farmers were men and once they bought the milk, it went to consumers, to restaurants and shops and to a processing plant. The farmers estimated that about 50% of the restaurant and shop owners were women.

The goat value chain is much shorter than the cow milk value chain, with more varied participation of women. Goat's milk was consumed at home, sold to neighbours (mainly by women) or sold to a collection centre (mainly by men). Goats were sold mainly to other farmers, to brokers or retained as breeding stock. Sales to others were done by either men or women, although women got much lower prices.

## Enhancing participation

Paying attention to women's constraints in marketing by providing skills and training, increasing access to assets and technologies, and applying appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms can enable women to effectively participate in formal value chains.

Understanding how and why women participate in markets can help identify intervention areas that optimise women's participation and their benefits.

Collective action has especially been shown to increase women's access to markets and services, as women can pool labour, resources, assets and even marketable products to overcome gender specific barriers that constrain them from participating in economic activities.



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With income from her livestock and beadwork, Noorkishili Naing'isa has been able to build an iron-roofed house

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